

TAKE CARE IN HANDLING AND GROOMING

Some rescue cats may still be learning (or re-learning) to trust humans, so empathy and patience are important tools to help your cat be their best, confident cat self. Some cats don't like to be picked up, so pay attention to their signals.

- Sit down at floor level. It is ideal for a cat to approach you first. Let the cat sniff your hand first, as smell is one of the cat's most important and strongest senses.
- Take your time — talk to your cat softly, be gentle, and observe the signs your cat gives you. Encourage affection and do this until they start to enjoy being touched.
- Limit petting to safe areas. Cats generally like being pet on their face, head and upper neck. Cats may be sensitive in certain areas such as the lower back, abdomen and paws, so avoid touching these areas until you learn your cat's preferences.
- Watch for signals that it's time to stop — tail swishing, pupils dilating, and ears flattening are signs that the cat has had enough for now.
- Come back every hour or so and repeat the process for a little longer each time, as often as possible.

Give your cat time to settle in and get to know you before attempting to groom them. Your cat needs to be brushed but it should be enjoyable. Try different sizes and textures of brush to determine their preferences. Brushing gives you an opportunity to examine your cat's body for any possible medical issues.

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SCRATCHING BEHAVIOUR

Cats use their claws to defend, to climb, to exercise, to mark territory, as well as for an emotional release if it is stressed or excited. This is a natural, healthy, and necessary activity for all cats and an essential exercise to maintain healthy muscles.

Encourage healthy and appropriate scratching by providing a good quality scratching post and use an appropriate nail trimmer to carefully clip only the clear portion of the nail.

Place the post beside any piece of furniture that your cat seems to like to scratch and cover any area or piece of furniture that your cat has chosen to scratch with double-sided tape, which can act as a deterrent.

KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS

Many of our rescue cats were discovered outside after having been abandoned or living the rough street life. These cats are ready to enjoy the rest of their lives in indoor comfort. Keeping your cat inside protects them from further dangers and trauma. Outdoor cats are subjected to the dangers of traffic, poisonous substances, injuries from other animals and cruelty from humans, and diseases. By allowing your adopted rescue cat to go outside, chances increase of them getting ill, attacked, or lost.

Action Volunteers for Animals (AVA) is an all-volunteer-run charitable animal rescue dedicated to helping stray and feral animals live healthy and happy lives.

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Learn more about AVA, fill out an adoption form, or make a donation at:

avacats.org



Adopting a Rescue Cat



The information provided here is designed to help you prepare and welcome your new feline companion into your home and life

Congratulations on adopting a rescue cat!

Thank you for deciding to adopt an adult cat and giving them a second chance at a forever home. Rescued cats have often experienced rough times in life and some have seen the worst of humanity. Whether abandoned by owners or born on the streets, these cats may have been subjected to aggression, disease, famine, and harsh weather. The fortunate ones are rescued by organizations such as AVA, cared for in a foster home, and put up for adoption to find their permanent loving guardians.

While it can take some time for rescue cats to learn to trust humans again, they often become loyal companions. Apart from time and patience from guardians, rescue cats need everything any cat needs — food, litter, water, toys, and love. Get started with our **Preparing Your Home For a New Cat** guide, which provides all the essentials for bringing a cat into your home. The information provided here offers tips to help your rescue cat live their best life.

PROVIDE A SAFE ROOM/SANCTUARY ROOM

For the first 7–10 days, your cat will need their own space — usually a spare bedroom or bathroom, where you can keep the cat safe and comfortable while they adjust to the new surroundings and family members. Keep your new cat isolated from other family pets during this time. You and your family should interact with the cat within the safe room frequently, offering play and gentle affection.

Cat-proof your safe room — removing any breakable or potentially hazardous items — and set up the room with all the essentials. In addition to food and water, litter box, and bedding, the safe room would ideally have a secure window for outside viewing and a safe hiding spot, such as their cat carrier.

Once your cat seems to have adjusted well to the safe room, allow them to explore new spaces around the house. For shy cats, build their confidence by playing with them and rewarding their positive exploration in new spaces.

Sounds can be a stress trigger for many cats. Help your new cat adjust by exposing them to as many of the normal household noises as possible. Start with radio/TV with the volume on low. Work up to running the electric vacuum briefly near the safe room but behind the closed door.

ENGAGE IN PLAY TIME

Physical and mental exercise are essential to an adult cat's health and well-being. It is vital for them to expend their energy in healthy and appropriate ways and it gives you a chance to bond with your cat and enjoy their unique behaviour. The leading cause of destructive behaviour is a lack of play time, so get playing!

Play Tips

- Engage in at least two, 10-minute interactive play sessions every day for adult cats.
- Toys with pieces that can be chewed or swallowed (string, feathers, or small plastic bits), should only be used under guardian supervision and put away after playtime.
- Hands are not toys! Discourage kittens and cats from playing with your hands or feet, redirecting their energy to an appropriate toy.
- Redirect any aggressive behaviour onto toys by dangling or tossing a toy. If, after attempts to discourage inappropriate play, you feel that your cat is playing too roughly, simply stop the play and leave the room. Be consistent.
- Never physically punish a cat. It only teaches your cat to fear you (or your hands, or the water bottle); cats do not learn through punishment or “time out”.
- Positive reinforcement is key: after successful play sessions, reward your cat!

MONITOR INAPPROPRIATE ELIMINATION: GOING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Rescue cats that have been in foster care are trained (or retrained) to use the litter box. If your cat is avoiding the litter box, there may be environmental or medical concerns.

Here are some reasons that a cat may choose not to use the litter box.

- **Cleanliness.** Litter should be scooped once a day, and more frequently for kittens.
- **Wrong location.** Place the box in a quiet, low traffic area, away from their food.
- **Too much (or too little) litter in the box.** Your cat needs to be able to scratch the bottom, and have enough litter to cover waste.
- **Type of litter.** Some cats are sensitive to, or have a preference for texture. Try filling a separate box with a new type only. With a second box, transition over the course of a week by slowly adding the new type of litter to the old.
- **Anxiety or stress.** The cat is now in yet another strange place with unfamiliar people. Note any major changes to the household that may cause stress.
- **Size of box.** Some larger cats need and prefer more space.
- **Aversion to scent.** Deodorizers, cleaners, or scented litter can be off-putting.
- **Territorial behaviour.** If reusing a litter box, clean it thoroughly with a water/bleach solution. Make sure there is at least one box per cat.
- **Medical issues.** House soiling can indicate a number of medical issues; even a cat eliminating just outside the box can be a sign something is wrong. If you hear the cat crying while in the box and there is only a small amount of urine, then an immediate visit to the vet is necessary.

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Rescue cats can be very social animals, and not just with fellow cats. With proper care and guidance, your cat may be friendly with visitors, kids, and other animals.

Introducing New People and Children

When introducing your rescue cat to guests, family, and young children, set a few ground rules to make these interactions positive for all parties.

- Remove shoes and bulky items like winter coats
- Get down on floor level, or to a lower level if the cat is perched on a cat tree or couch
- Speak using quiet, soothing voices, avoid loud, startling sounds and movements
- Use interactive toys to engage the cat
- Discourage anyone from interrupting a cat while eating, sleeping, or using the litter box
- Offer hands and fingers for the cat to sniff before attempting to pet or handle the cat

Never let someone who is unfamiliar with your cat pick them up or handle them in anyway. Never permit children to squeeze, yank or pull, hit, or throw objects at your cat.

Do not allow anyone to chase or corner your cat. When cats feel threatened, they may respond with aggression.

Introducing New Pets

See our “Introducing the New Cat to the Resident Cat” guide for cat-specific advice. For dogs, introduce the cat and dog through gradual exposure and under supervised conditions. If your pets have previous positive experiences living with another dog or cat, they may move easily into tolerating each other. Start the process by placing bedding or towels with your dog's scent in your new cat's safe room and bring your cat's bedding to your dog. Slowly bring your dog and cat into share spaces, monitor their interactions, and be ready to break up any fights.